

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 ACDA-12 EB-08
AGRE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /079 W
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FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2780
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL KRAKOW POUCH
ZMCONSUL POZNAN POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 WARSAW 0494

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY) PINT PL US UR XH
SUBJ: PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO POLAND: AN APPRAISAL

1. SUMMARY: A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT PRESIDENT CARTER'S WARSAW
VISIT DECEMBER 29-31 SHOWS A VERY POSITIVE BALANCE SHEET. THE
PRESIDENT AND MRS. CARTER SCORED A CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL SUCCESS
WITH THE PUBLIC, DESPITE STRENUOUS -- STRONGLY RESENTED --
EFFORTS BY POLISH SECURITY FORCES TO MINIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
FACE-TO-FACE CONTACTS. THE PRESIDENT ALSO GOT GENERALLY HIGH
MARKS AMONG POLES FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AT THE TELEVISED PRESS
CONFERENCE WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY WAS THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE VISIT IN
TERMS OF PUBLIC IMPACT. THE UNPRECEDENTED PRESS CONFERENCE
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ITSELF IMPRESSED MANY WITH ITS ATMOSPHERE OF OPENNESS AND CANDOR
AND UNINHIBITED GIVE-AND-TAKE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND HIS
INTERLOCUTORS. SOME POLES HAVE COMPLAINED THAT, ESPECIALLY AT
THE PRESS CONFERENCE, THE PRESIDENT WAS TOO LAUDATORY TOWARD HIS
HOSTS, IN PARTICULAR WITH RESPECT TO THEIR RECORD ON HUMAN
RIGHTS. OTHERS, HOWEVER, SAID THE QUALIFICATIONS IN HIS PRAISE
FOR GIEREK AND COMPANY WERE UNDERSTOOD BY THE POLISH AUDIENCE

AND THAT HIS APPROACH TO THE ISSUE WAS PRAGMATICALLY JUSTIFIED IN THAT IT GOT THE PRESS CONFERENCE, INCLUDING AN EXCHANGE ON THE NORMALLY TABOO SUBJECT OF SOVIET STRATEGIC WEAPONRY, ON THE AIR IN POLAND.

2. THE KEEN PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE VISIT MANIFESTED IN WARSAW REPORTEDLY WAS MATCHED IN AND AROUND POZNAN AND KRAKOW, ALTHOUGH IN THE LATTER AREA THAT INTEREST APPEARED TO FADE QUICKLY UPON THE PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE. ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY, THE LEVEL OF POPULAR ATTENTION SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN VARIABLE AND HIGHER WHERE THE CITIZENRY WAS LESS PREOCCUPIED WITH INADEQUACIES IN HOLIDAY FOOD SUPPLIES. OVERALL, POLES CLEARLY WERE GRATIFIED THAT THEIR COUNTRY ONCE AGAIN WAS INCLUDED IN A U.S. PRESIDENT'S ITINERARY. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE TRIP DID NOT PRODUCE MORE IMMEDIATE, CONCRETE RESULTS IN TERMS OF AMERICAN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. HOWEVER, MOST POLES SEEMED TO FIND JUSTIFICATION ENOUGH FOR THE VISIT IN WHAT THEY SAW AS RENEWED SYMBOLISM OF A SPECIAL U.S.-POLISH RELATIONSHIP, AND, IN THE CASE OF SOME PROMINENT DISSIDENTS, AS ITS INDICATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S MORAL SUPPORT. SOME KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSONS THOUGHT THESE SYMBOLIC ASPECTS WERE DISTURBING TO THE USSR. WHETHER OR NOT THIS WAS SO, THE PREDOMINANT VIEW CONVEYED TO US WAS THAT THE VISIT HAD BEEN GOOD FOR BOTH THE U.S. AND POLAND. END SUMMARY.

3. IN WARSAW ITSELF, THE LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE VISIT WAS VERY CONFIDENTIAL

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HIGH, DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT CAME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHRIST-MAS-NEW YEAR HOLIDAY SEASON. THAT FACTOR, PLUS FOUL WEATHER, FAILURE OF THE POLISH MEDIA TO PUBLICIZE THE SCHEDULE OF THE VISIT'S PUBLIC EVENTS, AND, ABOVE ALL, MEASURES BY POLISH SECURITY FORCES TO INSULATE THE CARTERS FROM THE PUBLIC, KEPT DOWN THE NUMBER OF POLES-IN-THE-STREET WITH WHOM THE PRESIDENTIAL COUPLE WERE ABLE TO MEET FACT TO FACE. WITH THOSE WHO DID MANAGE TO GET CLOSE ENOUGH FOR MUCH CONTACT, PRESIDENT AND MRS. CARTER SCORED A CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL SUCCESS. THE WARMTH AND ENTHUSIASM SHOWN TOWARD THEM BY THE POLES WERE UNMISTAKEABLE.

4. EFFORTS AT CROWD CONTROL BY THE SECURITY FORCES, ESPECIALLY NEAR THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER, WERE STRONGLY RESENTED AND LED TO A NUMBER OF CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN POLICE AND CITIZENS TRYING TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY. IN ONE SUCH INCIDENT, THE CROWD BROKE THROUGH A POLICE LINE, BUT WERE HELD BACK BY REINFORCEMENTS BEFORE REACHING THE ACTUAL CEREMONIAL AREA. NEAR THE GHETTO MONUMENT, THE PRESIDENT SUCCEEDED IN CIRCUMVENTING THE SECURITY FORCES' BARRIER AND THUS CREATED THE ONE REAL OPPORTUNITY DURING THE VISIT FOR A DIRECT PERSONAL GREETING TO ORDINARY CITIZENS. SEVERAL HUNDRED FRIENDLY VARSOVIANS IMMEDIATELY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY. POLISH SECURITY-

CONTROL MEASURES ALSO LIMITED THE SIZE OF THE CROWD DURING MRS. CARTER'S WALK THROUGH THE OLD TOWN, BUT, AGAIN, THOSE POLES WHO DID MANAGE TO APPROACH HER CLOSELY WERE ENTHUSIASTICALLY FRIENDLY.

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5. OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL, THE DEGREE OF POPULAR ATTENTION PAID TO THE VISIT MAY HAVE VARIED SOMEWHAT. OUR CONSULATE IN POZNAN REPORTS WIDESPREAD INTEREST AND A UNIFORMLY FAVORABLE RESPONSE AMONG POLES WITH WHOM CONSULATE OFFICERS DISCUSSED THE VISIT. CONSULATE KRAKOW REPORTS MUCH THE SAME REACTION WHILE THE VISIT WAS IN PROGRESS; VACATIONERS AT RESORTS IN THE AREA INTERRUPTED THEIR HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES TO WATCH EVERY TELEVISED EVENT. IN THE CITY ITSELF, INTEREST ALSO WAS HIGH. THE CONSULATE SAYS, HOWEVER, THAT THIS INTEREST FADED QUICKLY AS SOON AS THE PRESIDENT LEFT POLAND. REPORTS FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, NOTABLY THE SOUTHWEST, SUGGEST A CORRELATION IN MANY LOCALITIES BETWEEN PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE VISIT AND THE LOCAL HOLIDAY FOOD SUPPLY. ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS, WHERE FOODSTUFFS,
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ESPECIALLY MEAT, WERE AMPLE, PEOPLE TENDED TO FOCUS ON THE VISIT. WHERE THEY WERE NOT, THE CITIZENRY TENDED TO REMAIN PREOCCUPIED WITH ITS RESENTMENT OVER THAT CIRCUMSTANCE.

6. THE PRESIDENT ALSO ACHIEVED A PUBLIC-RELATIONS COUP WITH HIS TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE, EVEN APART FROM ITS CONTENT. A NUMBER OF POLES HAVE REMARKED UPON HIS POISE AND COMMAND OF SUBJECT MATTER IN HANDLING VARIED AND OFTEN DIFFICULT QUESTIONS. AND, OF COURSE, THE CONFERENCE ITSELF, WITH THE FREE GIVE-AND-TAKE THAT IS CUSTOMARY WHEN THE PRESIDENT MEETS THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS CORPS, WAS A REVELATION TO THE POLISH PUBLIC, PARTICULARLY, PERHAPS, IN THE PROVINCES. CONSULATE POZNAN, IN ANY CASE, REPORTS THAT ITS CONTACTS WERE ESPECIALLY STRUCK BY THE OPENNESS AND CANDOR THAT MARKED THE EVENT.

7. AS REGARDS WHAT WAS SAID AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE, MOST OF WHAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM POLES HAS BEEN FAVORABLE. SOME EXPRESSED SPECIAL APPRECIATION THAT THE CONFERENCE HAD BEEN SO INFORMATIVE, CITING IN PARTICULAR THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ON SOVIET STRATEGIC WEAPONRY (THE SS-20), A SUBJECT TABOO IN THE POLISH MEDIA. MANY PRAISED THE STATEMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE SOME COMPLAINTS, NOTABLY IN KRAKOW, THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS TOO LAUDATORY TOWARD HIS HOSTS IN THIS REGARD. A WARSAW JOURNALIST ALSO FELT THIS WAS THE CASE. HE THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ABOUT RELATIVE FREEDOM IN POLAND COULD, TO SOME EXTENT, UNDERCUT EFFORTS BY DISSIDENTS TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE COUNTRY. ON THE OTHER HAND, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE MOVEMENT FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS (ROPKO) THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT HAD ADVANCED THE DISSIDENTS' POSITION BY STATING HIS REGRET THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAD DENIED ACCESS TO THE PRESS CONFERENCE TO A ROPKO JOURNALIST AND BY FURNISHING A WRITTEN REPLY TO THE THREE QUESTIONS THE JOURNALIST HAD SUBMITTED.

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8. SEVERAL OTHER WARSAW JOURNALISTS HAVE TOLD US THE PRESIDENT HANDLED THE HUMAN-RIGHTS QUESTION WITH EXACTLY THE RIGHT TOUCH. THE POLES, ONE OF THESE JOURNALISTS SAID, WERE QUITE SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THAT HIS REFERENCES TO THE GIEREK REGIME'S HUMAN-RIGHTS PERFORMANCE WERE IN THE EASTERN EUROPEAN CONTEXT, AND THUS TO CATCH THE QUALIFICATIONS IN THE PRAISE HE OFFERED. THIS JOURNALIST THOUGHT THE RELATIVELY FAVORABLE TREATMENT OF THE ISSUE BY THE PRESIDENT HAD MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE PRESS CONFERENCE TO BE SHOWN OVER POLISH TELEVISION AND THAT THIS IN ITSELF PRAGMATICALLY JUSTIFIED THE APPROACH THE

PRESIDENT TOOK.

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AGRE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /079 W
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9. THE UNPRECEDENTED TV SHOWING OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WITH ONLY VERY MINOR EXPURGATIONS VIA TRANSLATION WAS A SENSATION. ALL EVIDENCE POINTS TO ITS HAVING RESULTED FROM A JUDGMENT AT VERY HIGH LEVELS THAT, ON BALANCE, THE CONTENT OF THE CONFERENCE FAVORABLE TO GIEREK AND THE POLISH GOVERNMENT HEAVILY OUTWEIGHED THE NEGATIVE ELEMENTS. IN TAKING THIS ACTION, THE REGIME UNDOUBTEDLY RISKED SOVIET DISPLEASURE, ESPECIALLY OVER THE DISSEMINATION TO THE POLISH PUBLIC OF THE EXCHANGES ON SOVIET WEAPONRY AND ON THE QUESTION OF SOVIET DOMINATION. WITH THIS IN MIND, A NUMBER OF POLES PRAISED GIEREK FOR HIS COURAGE IN ALLOWING THE PRESS CONFERENCE TO BE CARRIED ON TV AND PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS. (WE UNDERSTAND, INCIDENTALLY, THAT NOT ALL MAJOR PAPERS PRINTED THE TRANSCRIPT. THOSE THAT DID IMMEDIATELY SOLD OUT, RESULTING

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IN A BLACK MARKET AT ASTRONOMICAL PRICES.) A FEW POLES WE HAVE TALKED TO, INCLUDING A WELL-CONNECTED PARTY NEWSMAN, THOUGHT THE DECISION TO CARRY THE PRESS CONFERENCE SET A PRECEDENT FROM WHICH THE REGIME COULD NOT EASILY WITHDRAW. OTHERS WERE MORE DOUBTFUL THAT THE ACTION WOULD HAVE ANY CARRYOVER TOWARD GREATER MEDIA FREEDOM. ONE EXPRESSLY DESCRIBED THE PUBLICATION OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE AS A "VERY VALUABLE ONE-TIME EVENT."

10. COMPARED TO THE PRESS CONFERENCE, THE OTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND DOCUMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE VISIT TENDED TO PALE IN TERMS OF PUBLIC REACTION. ONE POLE VOLUNTEERED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL SPEECH HAD STRUCK JUST THE RIGHT PERSONAL NOTE, FRANK, HONEST, AND WITHOUT NORMAL "DIPLOMATIC" CIRCUMLOCUTIONS. IN THIS LIGHT, HE SAID, THE MISTAKES IN INTERPRETATION WERE INSIGNIFICANT. OTHER POLES ALSO TENDED TO MINIMIZE THE TRANSLATOR'S GAFFES. CONSULATE KRAKOW REPORTS THAT SOME IN THE AREA WERE BOTHERED BY THE LACK OF INFORMATION IN THE JOINT U.S.-POLISH COMMUNIQUE ON THE VISIT. IF THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST SECRETARY GOT ALONG SO WELL, THESE PEOPLE ASKED, WHY DID THE COMMUNIQUE NOT REVEAL SOMETHING OF WHAT THEY TALKED ABOUT AT SUCH LENGTH? IT MAY BE THAT SOME OF THESE PERSONS BLAMED THE POLISH MORE THAN THE U.S. SIDE FOR THE UNINFORMATIVE COMMUNIQUE, WHICH THEY SAW AS ANALAGOUS TO OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS ON GIEREK'S RECENT MEETINGS WITH CARDINAL WYSZYNSKI AND POPE PAUL.

11. AS REGARDS THE OVERALL RESULTS OF THE VISIT, POPULAR PERCEPTIONS ARE MOSTLY AFFIRMATIVE. POLES OBVIOUSLY WERE PLEASED TO MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE NEW U.S. PRESIDENT. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME DISAPPOINTED EXPECTATIONS THAT THE VISIT WOULD RESULT IN MORE IMMEDIATE, CONCRETE STEPS TOWARD PROVIDING AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, BEYOND THE ADDITIONAL \$200 MILLION CCC GRAIN-PURCHASE CREDIT ANNOUNCED AT THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE. (THIS, INCIDENTALLY, WAS YET ANOTHER UNPRECEDENTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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CLEAR PUBLISHED STATEMENT ON AN OTHERWISE TABOO SUBJECT.) AGAIN, THESE EXPECTATIONS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY HIGH IN KRAKOW, AND THIS MAY EXPLAIN THE ABRUPT LET-DOWN NOTICED IN THAT AREA WHEN THE VISIT WAS OVER. BUT EVEN THERE, AS ELSEWHERE ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND OVER A BROAD SPECTRUM OF THE SOCIETY, MOST POLES SEEMED TO FIND, IN THIS THIRD VISIT BY A (THIRD) U.S. PRESIDENT IN FIVE YEARS, WELCOME REAFFIRMATION OF A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. SEVERAL PROMINENT DISSIDENTS REPORTEDLY FOUND AN ADDITIONAL ELEMENT OF SYMBOLISM, BOTH IN THE PRESIDENT'S PRESENCE IN PRESENCE IN POLAND AND IN WHAT HE SAID WHILE HE WAS HERE. DISCUSSING THE PRESS CONFERENCE THEY WERE QUOTED AS SAYING THEY WERE THRILLED TO KNOW THEY WERE NOT ALONE. THEY DID NOT EXPECT MATERIAL HELP FROM THE U.S.,

BUT THEY FOUND PRESIDENT CARTER'S MORAL SUPPORT IMMENSELY IMPORTANT.

12. SOME POLES WERE SURE (DOUBTLESS WITH A MIXTURE OF APPREHENSION AND PLEASURE) THAT THIS RENEWED EMPHASIS ON U.S.-POLISH TIES AND THE SUGGESTION OF A POSSIBLE POLISH INTERMEDIARY ROLE IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS, AS WELL AS UNCOMFORTABLE SPECIFICS REGARDING THE USSR THAT CAME UP AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE, HAD TRIGGERED SERIOUS DISPLEASURE EAST OF THE BORDER. THEY POINTED TO THE SPATE OF PRO-SOVIET ARTICLES IN THE POLISH PRESS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE VISIT, AS WELL AS FOREIGN MINISTER WOJTASZEK'S APPARENTLY HURRIED TRIP TO MOSCOW, AS REGIME EFFORTS AT FENCE-MENDING. BUT, FOR THE TWO COUNTRIES DIRECTLY CONCERNED, ONE CATHOLIC JOURNALIST PROBABLY SUMMED UP THE FEELINGS OF THE MAJORITY OF POLES IN SAYING THE VISIT WAS A SUCCESS, ESPECIALLY FOR THE POLISH PEOPLE, BUT FOR THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST SECRETARY AS WELL.

DAVIES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978WARSAW00494
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780027-0199
Format: TEL
From: WARSAW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780147/aaaabnym.tel
Line Count: 349
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 06f33be2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3751042
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO POLAND: AN APPRAISAL
TAGS: OVIP, PINT, PL, US, UR, XH, (CARTER, JIMMY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/06f33be2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014